**Reila Bird-Duesing Chapter 1 &2 Response May 11th, 2009**

**Part One**:

**Evaluation vs. Research (p.5-8)**

* Understanding the difference between evaluation and research is crucial because they differ in the criteria and standards used to judge their adequacy.
* Evaluation is to help those who had a stake in whatever is being evaluated.
* Research is to add to knowledge in a field; to inform our judgements and decisions; to contribute to the growth of theory.

**What is the difference between informal and formal evaluation? (p.8-9)**

* Informal evaluation may lack systematic procedure and formally collected evidence.
* Experience, instinct, generalization and reasoning can all influence outcome of informal evaluations.
* Formal evaluation is more thorough and structured. Mark, Henry, and Julnes (1999) observe, “’has been developed to assist and extend natural human abilities to observe, understand, and make judgements about policies, programs, and other objects in evaluation” (p.179).

**How do you know when to use informal or formal evaluations?(p.9)**

* Use informal evaluation when formal evaluation is not a possibility.
* Know the basic purpose for the evaluation and what role and activities you are to assume for the evaluation.

**Roles and Activities of Professional Evaluators (p.12-13)**

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| --- | --- |
| *Roles* | *Activities* |
| * A critical friend * A teacher, helping practitioner develop critical judgement * Facilitator, collaborator * Management consultant * OD Specialist * Social change agent * Stimulating dialogue * Role in program planning * Help articulate program theories and logic models * Scientific expert | * Define purpose * Develop contracts * Hiring and overseeing staff * Managing budgets * Identifying disenfranchised or underrepresented groups * Working with advisory panels * Collecting and analyzing and interpreting data * Communicating to stakeholders * To report, write reports, disseminate information, meet with the press, recruit others to evaluate the evaluation |

**Formative and Summative Evaluation (p.16-20)**

* Formative Evaluation is to provide information to judge the merit or worth of a part of a program. Usually conducted at or near the end of a program.
* Summative Evaluation focuses on program improvement and more concerned with providing information to serve decision or assist in making judgements about a program adoption, continuation or expansion. Usually conducted at the beginning or in the middle of a program.
* The terms formative and summative help distinguish the purposes of the evaluation.
* Needs assessment, process, and outcome evaluations refer to the nature of the issues or questions that will be examined (p.21).

**Internal and External Evaluators (p.23)**

* Internal evaluators are likely to know about the program, its history, its staff, its clients, and its struggles than any outsider.
* External evaluators are hired form outside agencies and are considered to be more credible and objective, no previous biases.

**The History and Influence of Evaluation (p.30-43)**

* Evaluation is evident as early as 2000 B.C.
* Socrates used verbally mediated evaluations as part of the learning process.
* 1800-1940 - influenced by educational evaluation.
* 1940-1964- evaluation intended to help military personal and strategies (Sputnik I)
* 1964-1972- government programs in education, health, housing, criminal justice, unemployment required evaluation (ESEA of 1965).
* 1973-1984 – professional structure for evaluation were being formed. AEA and CEA create standard for evaluation and codes of conduct.
* 1985-present - evaluation is used for a variety of programs and the need for specialists is growing.

**What are some of the recent trends in Program Evaluation**?

(A more detailed list provided on p.44)

* The role of the evaluator can serve as an advocate where the evaluator forms his or her judgement or draws conclusion which are open to discuss and challenge. (p.44)
* Advances in technology allow for more accessible information and communication with stakeholders, yet raise ethical issues such as loss of privacy, leaving out those without access to technology, validity of information etc...
* Assessing and measuring performance in government and non-profit organizations by using standards-based assessments to track performance.
* Evaluation has grown internationally to address contemporary issues, monitor performance and improve society.

**Part Two:**

After reading chapter one, I have a broader sense of evaluation. To some degree, I feel overwhelmed with the amount of information provided for each type of evaluation. I did not realize that program evaluation was so complex and diverse. As a teacher, I take for granted that I conduct informal evaluations in my classroom on a regular basis. Thus, I assume many of the roles and activities of a professional evaluator daily. For example, four years ago I had the opportunity to develop an alternative grade nine math program for students who were considered “at risk” and considered “high needs”. I worked hard to develop a program that would meet the needs of my students and, at the same time, match my teaching philosophy. In doing so, I spent the majority of my time assessing the needs of my students and gathering data that would direct my decision making in choosing objectives and delivering curriculum. My program evolved over a three year period, yet at the end of the three years, I still felt the need to change and improve many areas. Perhaps if I had remained in the same position, I’d still be informally evaluating my program today. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement in programs as stakeholders and societies are forever changing.

I found chapter two somewhat difficult to follow due to the vast amount of historical references, however, the section that I found most interesting was the “Recent Trends in Program Evaluation”. The two trends that resonated with me the most were:

* The role of the evaluator can serve as an advocate where the evaluator forms his or her judgement or draws conclusion which are open to discuss and challenge.
* Advances in technology allow for more accessible information and communication with stakeholders, yet raise ethical issues such as loss of privacy, leaving out those without access to technology, validity of information etc...

Currently I am a board member on my children’s school community council (SCC). Last semester I initiated an informal “evaluation-like” research project for the SCC where the project focussed on improving parental and community involvement in the school. Although my project was more of a research-based project, I became an advocate for the SCC through reporting the data and offering suggestions for improvement. Being an advocate was the easy part, collecting the data was somewhat difficult. For instance, I interviewed and surveyed various community members using an online survey and email. Looking back on the process of gathering data, I was cognizant of the fact that many community members did not have access to technology so I therefore provided paper copies of the survey to each family in the school and interviewed a selected group of the community. Despite my efforts to be cognizant, the majority of my data came from the online survey. I believe that it was directly linked to the fact that the information I received was confidential and immediately entered into a database. Perhaps the community members who replied felt safer “online” than “onpaper”.

There seemed to be a recurring theme throughout both chapters with respect to program evaluation and education. Whether it be evaluating for the improvement of a program or a standards-based performance, program evaluation definitely has a home in the area of education. My hope is that the government agencies and organizations who initiate program evaluations take into consideration the complexities of the process and hire qualified evaluators to conduct the evaluations. All too often, we are left to make changes in our school divisions, schools and classrooms without truly understanding why or what brought about the change. Thus, SchoolPlus and the Continuous Improvement Framework are just two of the many initiatives that have come down the conduit from the Ministry of Education. I wonder if either one of the initiatives have or are being evaluated. If not, why not? If so, will we ever know? Just curious...